

THE SILLY LITTLE MOUSE

BY

DMITRI
SHOSTAKOVICH

@BOLDTENDENCIES

POLLY
GRAHAM

&

LOUD
CROWD

SUNDAY 11 JUNE at 5.30PM

The Silly Little Mouse

Op. 56 (1940)

by Dmitri Shostakovich

STARRING

Claire Booth as Cat

Edward Hawkins as Polkan the Dog and Pig

Kate Howden as Duck

Oleksandr Ilvakhin as Toad

Grace Nyandoro as Mother Mouse

Tom Randle as Horse

and Martin Bassindale in the silent role of Pike

with the Little Mouse ensemble played by

Tiwa, Oscar, Oliver, Olive, Bryn, Piera, Greta, Maya,

Yalda, Iris, Arahbella, Grae, Mika, Dora, Emilijia,

Leia, Annabella, Jake, Willow, Morgan, Lola,

Ameera, Hilda, Maia, Roukaya, Maryam & Olivia.

“When I hear about someone else’s pain,
I feel pain too. I feel pain for everything, for
people and animals.”

— Shostakovich

Dmitri Shostakovich's miniature cartoon opera *The Silly Little Mouse* is written for an eclectic animal cast of mouse, duck, horse, pig, toad, dog, fish, and a beautiful but dangerous black and white cat. The most delightful of the composer's works for children, the tale of farmyard animals and their unruly offspring is sung today in an English translation, re-framed and presented in a contemporary urban and human context.

Famously obsessive and secretly impassioned, Shostakovich (1906-1975) - the son of an engineer - did not begin formal piano lessons until the age of 9. His musical breakthrough came at 19 with the success of his first Symphony (his graduation piece) and he began a dual career as concert pianist and composer. That said, with complaints of his keyboard manner as "anti-sentimental" he soon made composition his sole focus, going on to write 15 symphonies, 15 string quartets, chamber works, concerti, song cycles, operas, ballets and film scores as well as an epic cycle of 24 pieces for solo piano.

Shostakovich's early acclaim was short-lived. With the establishment of the Soviet Union, Russian composers came under increasing scrutiny. Stalin's Five Year Plan called for the production of direct and popular music, with the aim of inspiring Soviet patriotism. In 1932 Jazz and Avant-garde music were officially banned. 1936 brought the start of the Great Terror: Shostakovich was denounced in the Soviet newspaper *Pravda* and the following years saw commissions, concert appearances and performances of his music decline, and his monthly earnings reduced by 85%.

Completed in 1939 *The Silly Little Mouse* was written during this period of intense political conflict. In a letter to his friend Flora Litvinova, Shostakovich wrote: “Without ‘Party guidance’...I would have displayed more brilliance, I could have revealed my ideas openly instead of having to resort to camouflage.” Nevertheless, his work is a brave example of a true artist’s response to unjust criticism, continuing to push boundaries under the playful veil of deceptively light and amusing pieces.

In the context of a dark and brooding 20th century Russia, where life was lived under the brutal thumb of the state, cartoon music offered a form of escapism. Based on the poem by Samuil Marshak, *The Silly Little Mouse* narrates the story of a mouse-child unable to fall asleep to his mother’s lullaby. Subsequently abducted by the devious Cat, we witness the animal crew rally and rush to the young mouse’s rescue. Shostakovich’s tale is the perfect work for our theme of Crisis: the ability to find joy in creation in the darkest of times, and the infallible power of community.

Shostakovich’s original tale is reworked as an exploration of parent/carer-child and child-community relations. Exploring the frustration that children feel as they increasingly long for freedom, an ensemble of 8-14 year olds have unpacked the opera this weekend in a series of workshops spanning costume and set design, chorus movement, creative translation and food workshops. The culmination of the cast's hard work and commitment, this celebratory performance is testament to the power and beauty of intergenerational co-creation, and the perennial importance of everyday creativity.

Cast and Crew

Claire Booth - Cat

British soprano **Claire Booth**, dubbed “the stunning voice of operatic isolation” (The Times), has received international acclaim for her “viscerally powerful” performances, with a diverse performance portfolio spanning work with video director Netia Jones, world premieres at the Bregenz and Aldeburgh Festivals, and a tour-de-force performance of Poulenc at London’s Wigmore Hall.

Edward Hawkins - Polkan the Dog and Pig

London-born **Edward Hawkins** began singing in his late 20s, after studying trumpet at the Royal Academy of Music. He has delivered many critically acclaimed performances including as Giulio Cesare for the English Touring Orchestra and in Barry Kosky’s *Saul*.

Kate Howden - Duck

Australian mezzo-soprano **Kate Howden** has a special interest in contemporary music. She has worked extensively with Australian contemporary circus group Circa and recently performed in the world premiere of Oliver Leith’s *Last Days*. An inaugural member of Barbara Hannigan’s Equilibrium Artists mentorship scheme, Howden was the recipient of the Jean Meikle Prize for a Duo at the 2015 Wigmore Hall/Kohn Foundation International Song Competition.

Oleksandr Ilvakhin - Toad

Ukrainian baritone **Oleksandr Ilvakhin**, a mainstay of the international opera circuit, has worked with the London City Philharmonic and Royal Academy Opera. Awarded second prize at the 2022 Certamen Nuevas Voces Ciudad de Sevilla

competition, he has performed in roles such as Mr Astley in Prokofiev's *The Gambler*, and Antonio in *Le Nozze di Figaro*.

Grace Nyandoro - Mother Mouse

Grace Nyandoro is a versatile lyric soprano, passionate about making opera accessible for all. She has participated in community and outreach projects including the Royal Opera House Engender x WeGrow Mentoring Programme, the ENO Baylis Opera Squad and English Pocket Opera. Her extensive performances as chorister and soloist include a role in Shostakovich's own *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* which won a Royal Philharmonic Society award.

Tom Randle - Horse

Beginning his early studies in conducting and composition, Los Angeles-born **Tom Randle** switched career direction after receiving a scholarship to study singing. Renowned for his vivid and committed stage portrayals, and unique ability to embrace a wide variety of repertoire, Tom made his debut with English National Opera as Tamino in *The Magic Flute*.

Martin Bassindale - Pike

London-based **Martin Bassindale** is an accomplished actor whose diverse stage credits include Shakespeare's *Henry V* at the RSC, the opera *L'histoire du Soldat* (*Opera di Firenze*), and *A Gallop Through History*, performed as part of the HRH Platinum Jubilee Celebrations in 2022.

Musical accompaniment is provided by **The Multi-Story Orchestra** - a community of professional musicians and young people who create extraordinary performances in unexpected spaces. The Orchestra brings powerful and meaningful music to life, driven by the belief that involving and valuing absolutely everybody produces the best art. Delivering the first BBC Proms

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performance to take place in a car park in 2016, the Orchestra's innovation was rewarded with a Royal Philharmonic Society Impact Award in 2023. The orchestra is led by Principal Conductor and co-founder **Christopher Stark**.

Loud Crowd was founded to deliver high-quality, innovative opera and music theatre that expresses and responds to contemporary issues. Founded by acclaimed opera and theatre director Polly Graham, who is also Artistic Director at Longborough Festival Opera, this is Loud Crowd's third year of opera making in partnership with Bold Tendencies.

Polly Graham - Director

Christopher Stark - Music Director

Hannah Wolfe - Design

Yael Loewenstein - Movement Direction

Andy Bewley - Associate Director

Ellen Muriel - Associate Director

Clodna Shanahan - Workshop Pianist

Sophie Lau (Stephen Spender Trust) - Workshop Leader

Sophie Shao (Sutton Community Farm) - Workshop Leader

Amy Wildgoose - Stage Manager

Jessie Anand - Producer

Project Funders

Genesis Kickstart Award

Arts Council England

Bold Tendencies 2023 Live Events Programme

Thursday 15 June at 7.30pm

Paul B. Preciado: Can the Monster Speak?

Introduced by Juliet Jacques

Saturday 17 June at 7.30pm

Philip Glass: Music for Organ

James McVinnie

Thursday 29 June at 7.30pm

Fitzcarraldo Editions Summer Celebration

Kate Briggs, Jacqueline Rose, Dorothy Tse, Polly Barton

Thursday 6 & Friday 7 July at 7pm

The Multi-Story Orchestra: Routes

Saturday 8 July at 7.30pm

Davóne Tines

Thursday 13 July at 7.30pm

The White Review Summer Party

Sophie Mackintosh, A K Blackmore, Momtaza Mehri

Saturday 15 July at 7.30pm

Richard Strauss: Four Last Songs & Metamorphosen

Manchester Collective with Soprano Ruby Hughes

Saturday 22 July at 7.30pm

Oona Doherty

Saturday 28 July at 7.30pm

Caleb Femi

Saturday 29 July at 7.30pm

Johan Dalene & Nicola Eimer

Music by Arvo Pärt, Francis Poulenc, Sam Wu, Edvard Grieg

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Saturday 19 August at 7.30pm

Galina Ustvolskaya: Dies irae (Day of Wrath)

Oliver Leith: good day good day bad day bad day

GBSR Duo

Thursday 24 & Friday 25 August at 7pm

The Multi-Story Orchestra: Into the Deep

Friday 1 September at 7.30pm

Jay Bernard: The Last Seven Years

Saturday 2 September at 7.30pm

Philip Glass: The Complete Piano Etudes

Maki Namekawa & James McVinnie

Thursday 7 September at 7.30pm

Jeneba Kanneh-Mason

Music by Shostakovich, Beethoven, Franz Liszt, Florence Price

Friday 8 September at 7.30pm

Isata Kanneh-Mason

Music by Haydn, Fanny Mendelssohn, Schumann, Chopin

Saturday 16 September at 7.30pm

Gustav Mahler: Symphony No. 1 "Titan"

Philharmonia Orchestra, conducted by Elena Schwarz

We need your help!

Every year we fundraise to keep our programme thriving and to keep tickets affordable. This means ticket sales only cover about 5% of our costs. Every donation, however big or small, has a major impact and helps us to do more and better. Donations can be made on-site and on-line on our website.

Huge thanks to our 2023 Supporters

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